

COLLOQUIUM BY MICHAEL OPPER

POPULARIZING THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN BAI: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

TIME: 5:00-6:00 PM, WEDNESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2018

VENUE: ACADEMIC BUILDING 1079

Popularizing the Study of Southern Bai: Challenges and Prospects

Speaker: Michael Opper, visiting faculty member at Southwest University (Chongqing),
Ph.D. in Linguistics at the University of Michigan

* The event is also a faculty recruitment seminar for Language and Culture Center.

ABSTRACT:

Although there are approximately two million Bai people living in the People's Republic of China, it is not entirely clear how many people actually speak varieties of Bai. Central Bai, specifically the dialect of Jinhua village in Jianchuan county, has been selected as the representative standard to be promoted throughout the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province in educational and formal contexts. Despite efforts by local governments and NGOs, the promotion of Bai has been less successful than intended. In the Southern Bai area, this is at least partially due to the perceived divergence between the standard and the local varieties. In this talk I discuss recent local developments in popularizing Southern Bai, problems faced by researchers and language learners of this unwritten language, and the importance of the Bai language for historical studies of southwest China as well as historical linguistics.

BIO:

Michael Opper is currently a visiting faculty member at Southwest University in Chongqing. He earned his PhD in Linguistics at the University of Michigan and his BA in Chinese and

Linguistics at Rutgers University. His primary research combines aspects of theoretical linguistics and language documentation to enhance existing descriptions of Sino-Tibetan languages. Mike has worked on a range of Chinese dialects and Tibeto-Burman languages, most notably Southern Bai. He has taught Chinese as a foreign language, English writing to native and non-native speakers, and various courses in linguistics.

This event is open to all. For any queries email yg73@duke.edu or call 3665 7149.

Hope to see you all.

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